

# White paper marketing in action

A WHITE PAPER is most effective when it feeds into other marketing strategies, such as PR, public speaking and search engine optimization.

**zyzzyva** published a white paper in mid-2011 that addressed a problem facing design sectors worldwide – the practice of free pitching (where designers give their expertise away for free to client prospects in the hope of winning new business).

The paper continues to generate leads for us, as well as enhancing our brand visibility and credibility. Here's how we did it.

## 1. Determining target audience

We began planning our paper in early 2011, and recognised our deepest knowledge at that time lay in the design sector, which we opted to target. But we still needed to pinpoint our optimum audience.

The choices were:

- Design students / graduates
- Freelance designers
- Small- to medium-sized agencies
- Major agencies

We discounted students, graduates and freelancers because they are cash poor.

While cash rich, major design agencies also have in-house marketing teams, and we didn't wish to preach to the converted.

So we decided smaller design agencies were our best audience, as they often free pitch yet employ new-business managers who might be receptive to our ideas.

But we still had to decide whether to

target the UK design sector or go after an international audience. We opted for the latter, because free pitching is a global problem, plus our work can be conducted remotely, so geography is not an issue.

## 2. White paper content

Our paper proposed that design agencies use content-driven market positioning instead of free pitching to win new clients. It's far better to have third parties evangelize one's ideas than brain-dump expertise on readers, which is why we built our paper around:

**Case studies** We sought out successful non-pitching design agencies who use market positioning to win new business. (We found them on LinkedIn Groups, and conducted telephone interviews with senior designers from these agencies).

**Experts** We interviewed senior figures from design bodies in the UK and US. This lent gravitas to our messages.

**Reports** We sourced industry reports that reinforced what the experts were saying.

## 3. Tailored web presence

We built a **zyzzyva**-branded website ([selldesign.biz](http://selldesign.biz)) around our paper to engage prospects from design sectors worldwide. This site works on two levels:

**As a brochure** It enhances our credibility with client prospects we meet via networking online and in person.

**As a Google magnet** We spent time



*zyzzyva* founder Sean Ashcroft addresses an audience of designers at the V&A – an event that sprang from our white paper, 'Why Design Stopped Being Special'.

optimizing the site on search terms used by design agencies looking to improve their marketing mix, and the site continues to draw targeted traffic.

## 4. Speaking event

A thought leadership white paper is ideal for building presentations, seminars, speeches and workshops. We approached the organisers of the annual [London Design Festival](#) with a proposal to turn our paper into a festival event.

**zyzzyva** founder Sean Ashcroft ended up addressing around 100 designers from around the world at London's V&A museum. As well as generating quality leads, being involved in a prestigious festival at an iconic location had a halo effect for our business.

## 5. PR campaign

With our background in journalism, PR comes as naturally to us as content creation.

We orchestrated an online and print PR campaign to drive visibility, both for our [white paper](#) and our [presentation](#).

Our media-rich press releases were optimized on relevant keywords, and still draw traffic to the [selldesign.biz](http://selldesign.biz) website

We also approached the major design websites, blogs and publications worldwide with our releases, and many of them ran [news](#) and [feature](#) pieces.

## 6. Subscription service

On [selldesign.biz](http://selldesign.biz) visitors are invited to subscribe to **zyzzyva**'s design-business content service. To date, we have nearly 400 subscribers (including those who attended our London Design Festival event).

We provide our subscribers with occasional e-newsletters and e-books that are helpful for those running a design business. This drives audience engagement and reinforces trust.